



**RYAN SPEIDEL**  
**Children's Ombudsman**

# A SHORT HISTORY LESSON

Ombudsman	Standards of practice	The OCO
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Swedish Term</li><li>• Origin Parliament 1809<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Nonpartisan</li></ul></li><li>• Broad jurisdiction</li><li>• Independent</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• American Bar Association</li><li>• United States Ombudsman Association</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 1994 - Created in legislation</li><li>• Department of Technology, Management and Budget</li></ul>

# MISSION AND ROLE OF THE OCO



The mission of the Office of the Children's Ombudsman is to help improve Michigan's child welfare system through:

1. Awareness, Advocacy, Public Education, Review and Recommendation.



The role is to advocate for children and identify areas for improvement in the child welfare system.

# THE CHILDREN'S OMBUDSMAN ACT

## Powers

- Advocacy
- Public Education
- Investigate/Review/Ensure Compliance
- Pursue all Necessary Action... (mcl 722.925a)
- Findings & Recommendations
  - For improvement
- *Not a regulatory body*

## Responsibility

- Annual Report
  - Advise the Governor, MDHHS, & Legislature
- Child death case review

# DEATH ALERT INVESTIGATIONS

- What is a Death Alert? Why do we receive them?
- MCL 722.926(2)
  - Shall investigate (Preliminary or Full):
    - Preliminary Investigation vs. Full Investigation
    - All child fatality cases where child abuse or neglect is suspected in the death.
    - If one or more of the following occurred within 24 months preceding the child's death:
      - Active child protective services investigation
      - Open services case
      - Assigned or rejected complaint made CPS centralized intake (CI)
      - The child's death occurred while in foster care
      - The child (or a sibling) was returned home from foster care

# COMPLAINANT CASES

- **MCLA 722.924 (4)**
  - **Any individual may submit a complaint to the ombudsman.**
  - **Only the Ombudsman can decide...**
    - **What an administrative act is**
    - **If a complaint shall be opened**
  - **The ombudsman may initiate an investigation without receiving a complaint.**
  - **Administrative act contrary to law, rule, and/or policy**
    - **Ultimately – Did or is the right thing happening**

# SO, YOU'RE A 'COMPLAINANT'

MCL 722.925

The child

A biological  
parent

A foster  
parent of the  
child.

An adoptive parent  
or a prospective  
adoptive parent of  
the child.

Appointed  
guardian of  
the child.

A guardian ad  
litem of the  
child.

Adult - related to  
the child within  
the fifth degree

A Michigan  
legislator.

Mandatory  
Reporter

Attorney for  
any of the  
Above

All Others

## **CONFIDENTIALITY AND THE OCO**

**The OCO is exempt from  
FOIA**

**All records are  
confidential**

**Complainants & Witnesses  
are confidential**

# DAY TO DAY OPERATIONS



EDUCATION



PRELIMINARY  
INVESTIGATIONS



INVESTIGATIONS



MEDIATION



FINDINGS &  
RECOMMENDATIONS



RELEASED REPORTS  
(AR, F&R)

# KEY TAKEAWAYS

- **The OCO was created to inform:**
  - Advocacy, Review and Recommendation, Public Education
- **Confidentiality**
  - Our investigations and interviews are extremely confidential
  - Results of investigations are sometimes shared
- **Working with MDHHS**
  - Investigations
  - Interviews
  - Recommendations
- **Cooperation**
  - Open dialogue

# QUESTIONS?

OCO Contact Numbers:

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